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26 June 1961

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Briefing of the Board of National Estimates by Robert Matteson, subject, "Disarmament", 22 June 1961

1. Mr. Matteson described the first three days of the bilateral negotiations between the US and the USSR. His description will not be repeated here since we are receiving copies of the official State Department memoranda of conversation.

2. Mr. Matteson also described a session with Mr. Usachev which was held at a local restaurant on 21 June. A memorandum of conversation is also available on this meeting. Mr. Matteson made the following points which are not covered, or not completely covered, in the memorandum of conversation:

a. Usachev first said that the Soviets were not helping in Laos to any great extent, but later admitted that they were. He said that China had more of an interest in Laos than the Soviet Union. He said that there were differences between the two allies as in any "free society", but no break between China and the USSR.

b. Aid to Nasser and others like him will pay great dividends in the future because aid helps the people and the people will remember. Usachev said that the objective of such aid was to undercut our capitalists, i.e. to deprive our capitalists of their markets by providing the underdeveloped countries with production facilities. Usachev said that the US aided these countries in such a way as to keep them dependent on the US for spare parts.

c. Kennedy made a good impression in Vienna. He left an impression of firmness and confusion--the latter because he was saddled by the past and also because he was new.

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d. Matteson asked Usachev whether Latin Americans would make good Communists in view of their temperament. The answer was yes. He added that "Che" Guevara is a Communist but that the US made him one, not the Soviet Union.

3. Mr. Matteson said that a Principals Meeting would be held on 30 June to make recommendations on whether the US should put forward a disarmament policy which, in effect, begins with first measures for confidence building and then goes through three stages leading to a peaceful world under the rule of law, or whether we should opt for only a few stabilizing measures plus possibly some selected proposals for limiting arms. The USDA favors the former course, in part because it is more politically acceptable to our Allies. The USDA has been pointing out that we should not alienate our Allies on this issue because we are going to need their support in the Berlin crisis. The USDA also believes that we cannot leave the field to the Russians, as would be the case if our proposals were of the limited kind. Agreeing with the USDA are some portions of State, USIA and Weisner. Defense, JCS, AEC and Bundy prefer the limited proposals. McCloy has not made up his mind. All agree that no real negotiations will take place.

4. McCloy does not want to conduct the multilateral negotiations. William C. Foster will take over if Congress passes the right statute for the USDA (presumably as disarmament advisor as well as negotiator). Dean is willing to conduct the multilateral negotiations and so is Fisher.

5. The Department of Defense (ISA) comment on the draft Negotiating Proposal dated 31 May 1961 was very severe. It said, in effect, "Dear Jack, you are a traitor." By making this proposal, it went on, the US is acquiescing in Soviet disarmament proposals which will result in a great lessening of US military security. The comment inferred that the US draft proposal was the same as the Russian proposal. Nitze said later that this comment should never have gone out, that it was a mistake. Indeed, a General from DOD, whose name I did not catch, apologized to the USDA. There were apparently comments from JCS as well as DOD (ISA). Both were based on military considerations, but the JCS comments were quite straightforward. It was the Defense comments which were the rough ones.

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6. General Thatcher, who is the number two man on disarmament on the Joint Staff, wants to base our disarmament negotiations on a posture or strategy of military superiority. He defines this as the ability on the part of the US to pulverize the USSR more than they can pulverize us even after they have made the first strike. Matteson quoted him as saying that he would not be wearing his uniform if he did not believe in US military superiority.

7. No one has really decided what our military strategy should be. The Rowen paper contains elements of two strategies. The section on arms control gives the impression that what we seek is stabilized parity. Other parts give a different impression--that we seek military superiority and a counter-force capability.

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